

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 10209 302057Z

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TAGS: PFOR CU VE

SUBJ: THREAT TO CUBAN-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS SUBSIDES

REF: CARACAS 10178, 10153, AND 10125

SUMMARY. FOLLOWING THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE TWO CUBAN ASYLEES AT THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN HAVANA FOR A PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH THEY AFFIRMED THAT THEY HAD VOLUNTARILY GIVEN UP THEIR ASYLUM, THE THREAT POSED TO CUBAN-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS HAS SUBSIDED, ALTHOUGH THE EPISODE WAS EMBARRASSING FOR BOTH GOVTS AND REMINDED VENEZUELAN OF THE REPRESSIVE NATURE OF THE CASTRO GOVT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTRY ISSUED FOLLOWING COMMUNIQUE EVENING OF SEP 29. QUOTE. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISES THAT LAST SATURDAY, SEP 27, IT WAS NOTIFIED BY THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR IN CUBA THAT THE ASYLEES ALFREDO ARENCIBIA RODRIGUEZ AND ILEANA DE JESUS LAMBIDIA, WHO WERE IN PROVISIONAL ASYLUM GRANTED BY THE GOVT OF VENEZUELA IN OUR EMBASSY IN HAVANA, HAD LEFT THE EMBASSY AND RENOUNCED THE PROTECTION ACCORDED THEM. (PARA.) AS SOON AS THIS OCCURRED THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, ON INSTRUCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, ORDERED THE VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR IN CUBA TO ASK THE GOVT FOR MORE INFO CONCERNING THE MATTER. IT WAS ARRANGED,
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PAGE 02 CARACA 10209 302057Z

BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE CUBAN GOVT, FOR THE

VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO SPEAK PRIVATELY AND SEPARATELY IN THE RESIDENCE OF THE EMBASSY WITH THE TWO ASYLEES, IF THEY INDICATED THEIR DESIRE TO CONTINUE IN ASYLUM THEY WOULD REMAIN IN THE EMBASSY UNTIL SUBSEQUENT STUDY OF THE MATTER, AND IF THEY DECIDED TO RENOUNCE PROVISIONAL ASYLUM THEY WOULD ALSO DO SO WITH THE CONSEQUENT GUARANTEES. (PARA.) THE GOVT OF CUBA OFFERED THE ASYLEES THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE AN INTERNATIONAL PRESS INTERVIEW AFTER THEIR CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, WHICH OFFER WAS ACCEPTED BY OUR EMBASSY AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. UNQUOTE.

2. CARACAS PRESS REPORTS THAT THE CUBAN ASYLEES APPEARED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN HAVANA THE AFTERNOON OF SEP 29 AND AFFIRMED THAT THEY HAD GIVEN UP ASYLUM "BY THEIR OWN WILL AND WITHOUT THREATS OR PRESSURE OF ANY KIND." ARENCIBIA SAID HE WAS SORRY TO HAVE PUT THE VENEZUELAN GOVT IN AN AWKWARD POSITION, AND LAMBIDIA SAID SHE WANTED THEIR CHILD TO BE BORN IN CUBA. PRESS DESCRIBES ARENCIBIA AS A 35-YEAR OLD CHAUFFEUR WHO HAD BEEN IMPRISONED FOR ATTEMPTING TO FLEE CUBA VIA GUANTANAMO.

3. GOV HAS SENT AN AIRPLANE TO FETCH AMBASSADOR TAYLHARDAT TO CARACAS, WHERE HE IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE SEP 30 TO REPORT TO THE GOV.

4. FONMINISTER ESCOVAR TOLD PRESS NIGHT OF SEP 29 THAT THE EPISODE WAS CONCLUDED AND THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND CUBA ARE "NORMAL".

5. COMMENT. THIS EMBARRASSING THREAT TO CUBAN-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS HAS THUS SUBSIDED, BUT THE EPISODE, WHICH CREATED A FUROR IN CARACAS, SERVED TO REMIND VENEZUELAN THAT THE CASTRO GOVT WITH WHICH THE GOV WAS SO EAGER TO RENEW RELATIONS STILL REMAINS A REPRESSIVE DICTATORSHIP.
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